

HEPATITIS



GET THE FACTS

Inspired by and Dedicated to:
the OASIS Volunteer Staff

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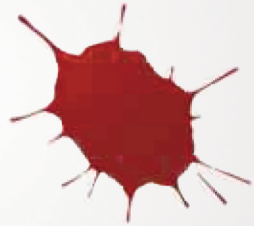
With the help of:
Laurence Mersilian, Director of CAPAHC

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abbvie

We thank Abbie who has provided his financial support
to make the Canadian version of this brochure.

All content was developed independently by CAPAHC.

What is hepatitis?

“Hepa”

means
liver

and

“itis”

means
inflammation



So “hepatitis” just means **INFLAMMATION**
of the **LIVER**. Like “appendicitis” means
inflammation of the appendix.

There are over 100 causes of hepatitis and two of the most common in Canada are alcohol and obesity.



If hepatitis is caused by a virus, it is given a letter, like hepatitis A, B or C.

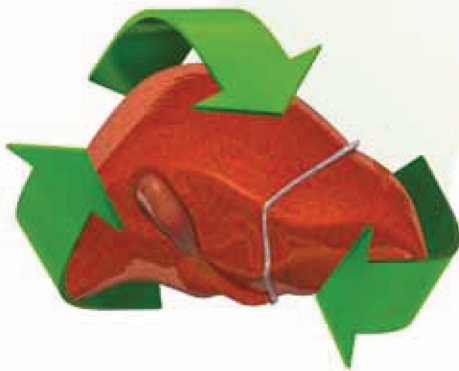
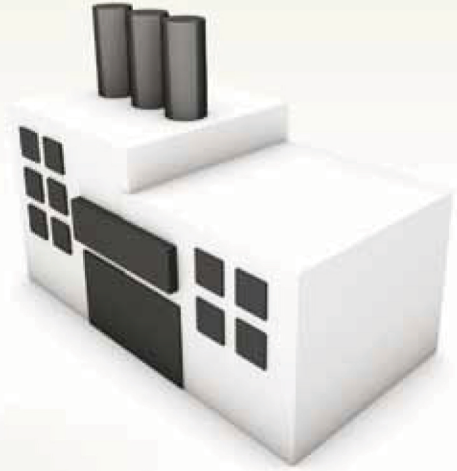


What does the liver do?

The liver is the body's factory.

It makes key proteins,
such as those that
clot your blood.

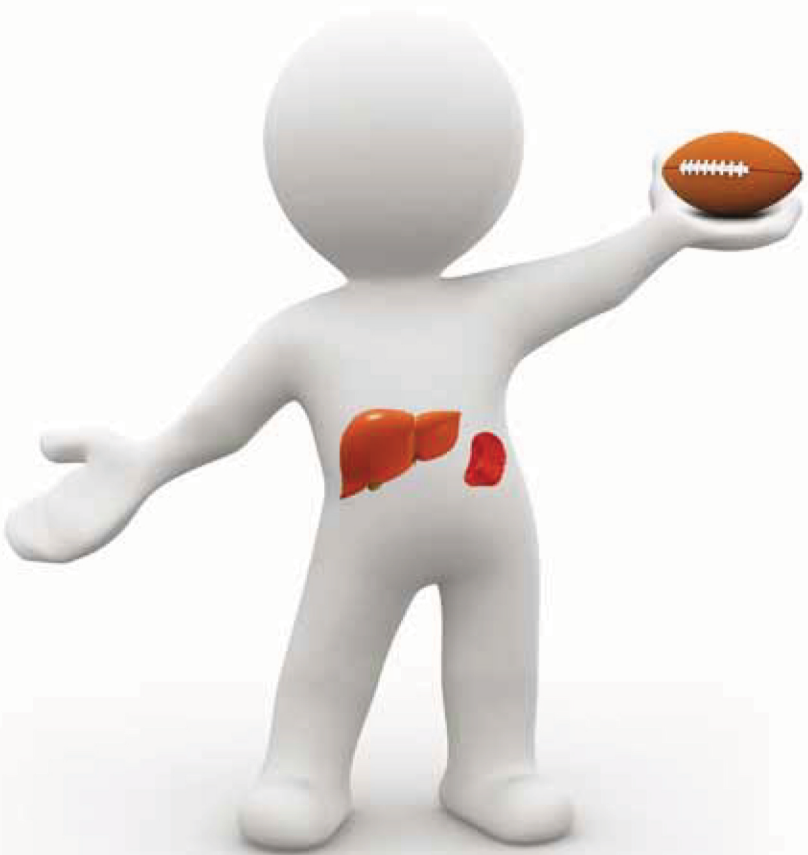
It recycles important
substances, like
hemoglobin.



And it removes poisons from your body.

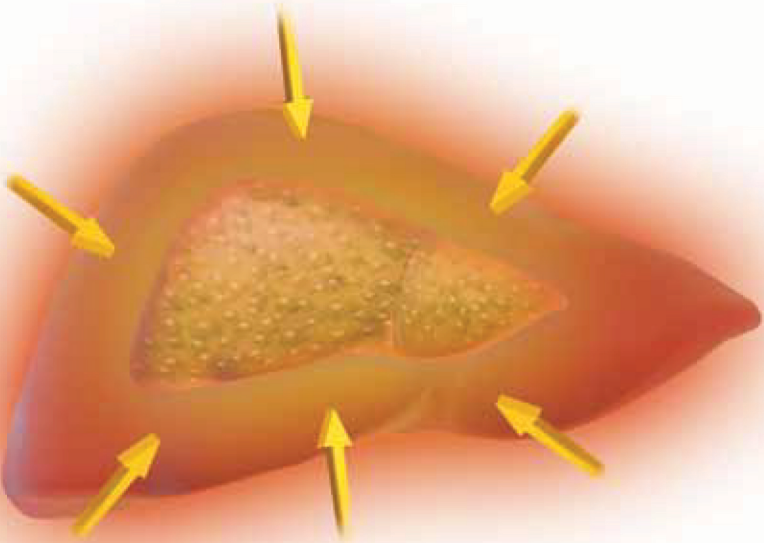
Where is the liver located?

The **liver** is located under your ribs, on the right side of your abdomen. The liver about the size of a football.



The liver's partner is the **spleen**, located on the other side of the stomach, on the upper left of the abdomen.

Some people with hep C may get a swollen liver that feels sore, but that doesn't always happen.



The liver gets larger when it is inflamed, but if more seriously damaged, it shrinks and can become small and firm.

What is cirrhosis?

Cirrhosis just the medical word for a lot of scarring in the liver.

Unlike a smooth reddish healthy liver,

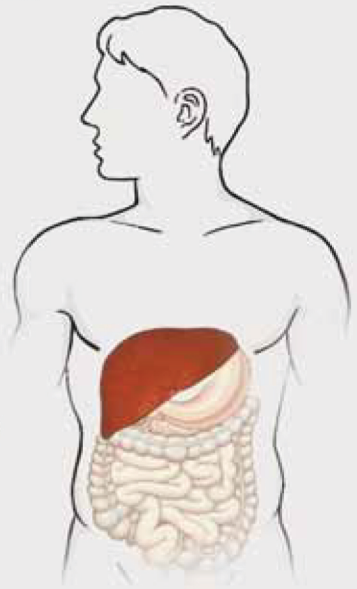
a liver with cirrhosis is firm, yellowish and bumpy.



Because much of it has been replaced with scar, it can feel like rubber! Not surprisingly, if you have cirrhosis there is less healthy tissue to do its work, and that is why people with cirrhosis can become ill. If you have SOME scar tissue but not a lot, that is called **FIBROSIS**.

If you catch it early, your liver damage can be reversed.

The liver can regenerate!



How do you get hepatitis C?

THINK

BLOOD!



About 60 out of 100 with hep C got it from **NEEDLES**.



10 out of 100
got it from a
**BLOOD
TRANSFUSION.**



Other risk factors:

Sharing other drug equipment, including:

Cocaine straws
Crack pipes



Sex, especially
for those who:

- Have multiple partners
- Have STIs
- Engage in rough sex

Tattoos
and
piercing



Mother
to
child



Unfortunately, we
don't exactly know
the percentage of
each of these risk
factors in Canada.

What about my family and friends?

GOOD NEWS!

It's **safe** to touch, hug, and kiss your family and friends.



Also, sharing cups, plates and cooking and eating utensils is fine.



Be careful with ...

BLOOD

If you bleed, clean it up! Always cover your wounds.



Do NOT share:

- toothbrushes
 - razors
 - or even nail clippers
- ... just to be safe.



NEVER, EVER SHARE:

needles, syringes, cottons,

cookers, or rinsewater.

Watch out for cocaine straws and crack pipes, too.
There may be enough blood on them to spread hep C!



What about sex?

Use **CONDOMS** if you have more than one sex partner or aren't in a stable relationship.



If you are in a long-term monogamous relationship, your chances of passing it on are very low.



If you're not sure, talk to your partner. BE SAFE!

Is hepatitis C common?

YES!

In Canada, nearly 250 000 people are infected with hepatitis C. There are 170 million cases worldwide.



In Canada there are **7 times** as many cases of hepatitis C as HIV.

About 1 out of every 100 Canadians have hepatitis C.

**Give it to me straight:
How much time have I got?**



Relax! For most people, hep C is a pretty mild disease.



Even after 20 years, only 1 out of 5 people
will have cirrhosis!

What can make hep C worse?

ALCOHOL

It's really bad news for your liver!

Alcohol and hep C are like gasoline and fire.



Other things that can make hep C worse:



HIV

HEPATITIS B



CIGARETTES

MARIJUANA



So take good care of yourself, and
get regular medical attention.

What are the symptoms of hepatitis C?



A lot of people don't have any, but the most common symptom is **FATIGUE**.

Some people have **FEVER**, or muscle and joint aches.



Or vomiting, **NAUSEA**, loss of appetite, or stomach pains.

You can have bad symptoms, and still be healthy!

I feel fine!

Doesn't that mean my liver's okay?

Not always. You **CAN'T JUDGE** hepatitis C by how you feel.



Although you are probably healthy, some people develop cirrhosis from hepatitis C before they have any symptoms. Hepatitis C can be sneaky. Why risk it? Get checked!

My blood tests are normal. Can I forget about hepatitis C?

It **IS** true that normal liver enzymes mean you probably **DO** have a healthy liver. But you can still have hepatitis C, even though those tests are normal.



If you're not sure, ask your doctor for a hep C test!

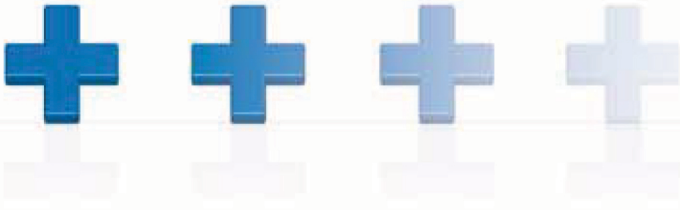
I was told I have hepatitis A, B and C Now I'm really scared!

Relax.

That's what a lot of people are told, but it is usually wrong!



What they should say is that you were **EXPOSED**.
You were probably infected or vaccinated in the past,
and still have antibodies in your blood to prove it.



Blood tests can stay **POSITIVE** long after an infection is gone.

So most people with a positive hep B test don't have hep B anymore. They were exposed in the past. Ask your doctor, so you can be sure.



It is important to know about your hep A and B tests.

If you haven't been exposed, then you should be vaccinated!

So how do I find out if I have hep C?

The screening test is called an **ANTIBODY TEST**. It looks for the **FOOTPRINTS** of hep C in your blood. If the test is positive, it doesn't mean you have hep C!

You could have cleared the infection on your own!



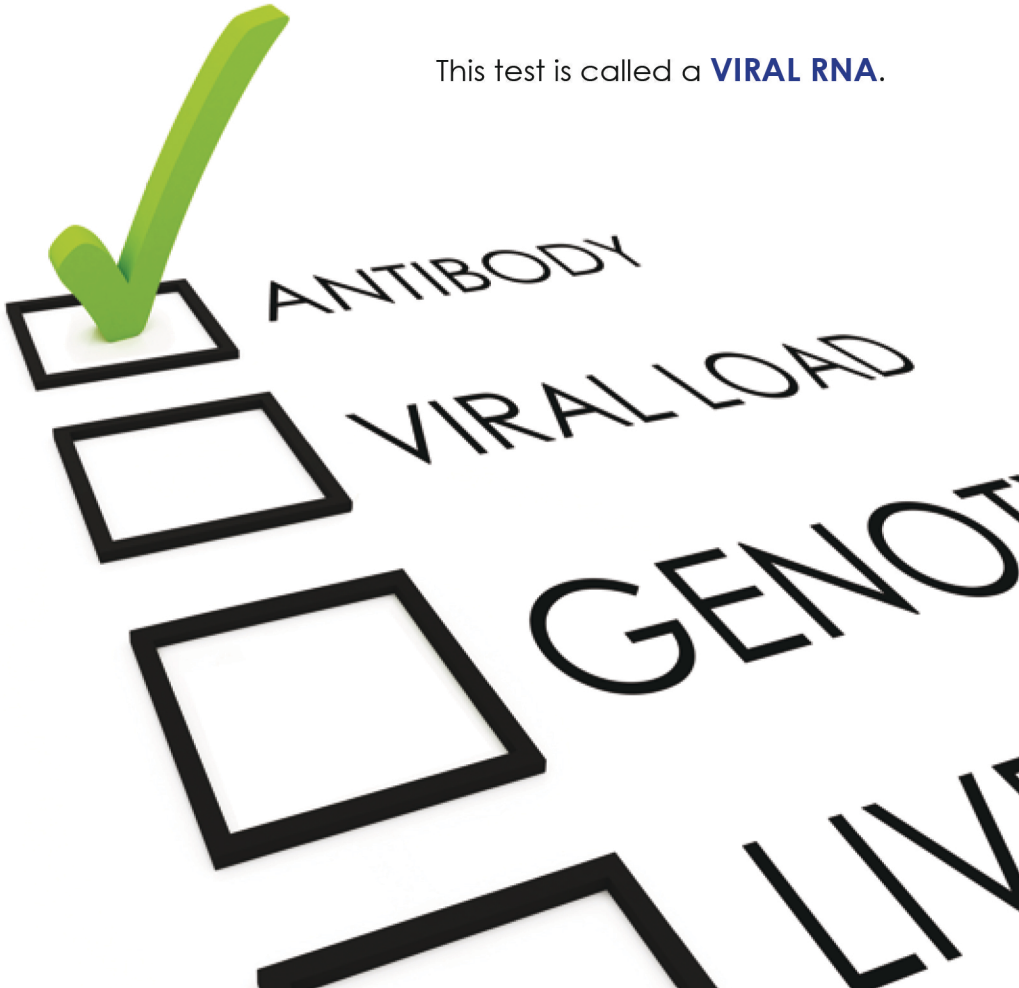
An antibody test can only tell you whether the virus was in your body at some point, NOT whether the infection is still there **NOW**.

About **1** in **4** people

will clear hep C on their own!

The virus is gone! They don't really have hepatitis C, but the screening test will still be positive. The only way to find out if you actually have hep C is to get a *second* blood test.

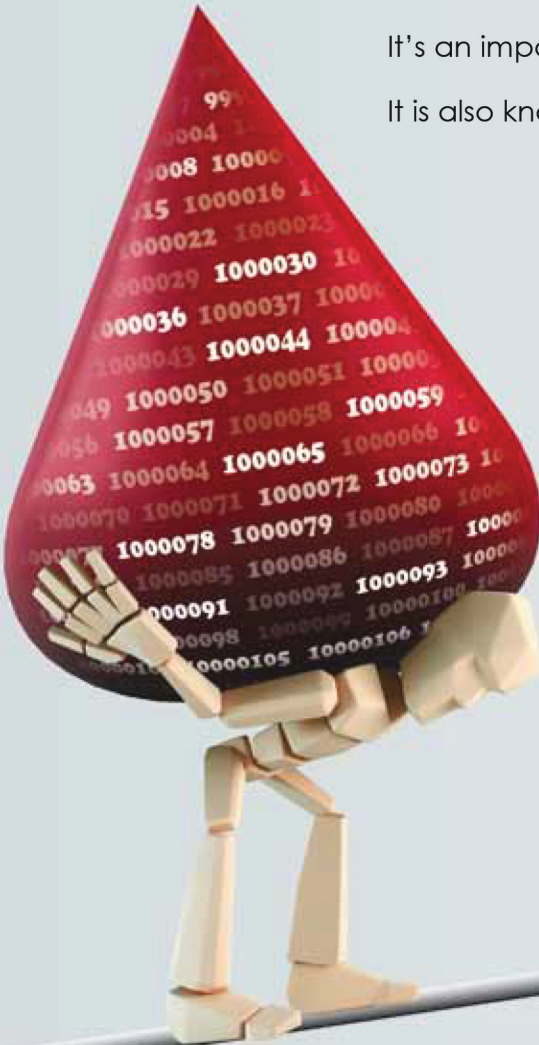
This test is called a **VIRAL RNA**.



What is a viral RNA?

It's an important blood test.

It is also known as the **viral load**.

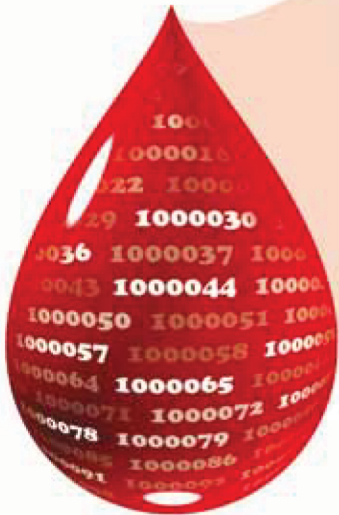


It tells you whether you still have hep C virus in the blood
... or whether it's gone.

A lot of people have virus numbers
in the MILLIONS,

BUT RELAX!

Most people don't know this:
high hep C virus numbers don't
mean you have worse liver
damage. **So don't worry!**

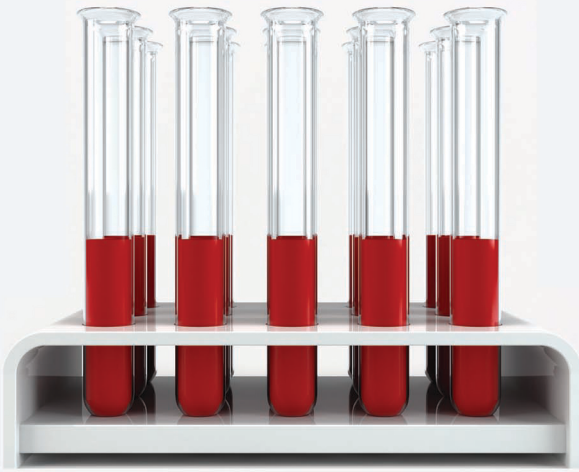


Viral loads are often in the millions, even though your liver is perfectly healthy. A high viral load doesn't tell you that your liver is sick. Just get checked!

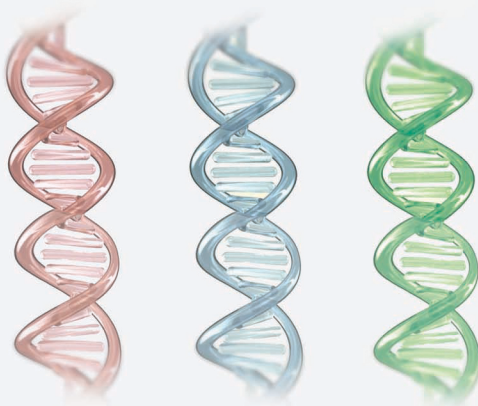
What is a genotype?

Another important blood test.

It helps determine which treatment you may need!



Genotypes are like different **strains** of the hep C virus. All genotypes have the same effect on the liver, but some are easier to get rid of than others.



In Canada,
GENOTYPE 1 is the most common.

Almost everyone else has

GENOTYPE 2

or

GENOTYPE 3



The other hep C genotypes are 4, 5, and 6.
They are more common in other parts of the world.

So, do I really need treatment?

PROBABLY
NOT

Many people live for years without developing much liver damage from hep C. The decision about whether you need treatment should be made by you and your doctor, together.



What is hep C treatment like?

It depends.

These days, there are LOTS of different hep C medicines!



Until recently, most people took **SHOTS** and **PILLS**...



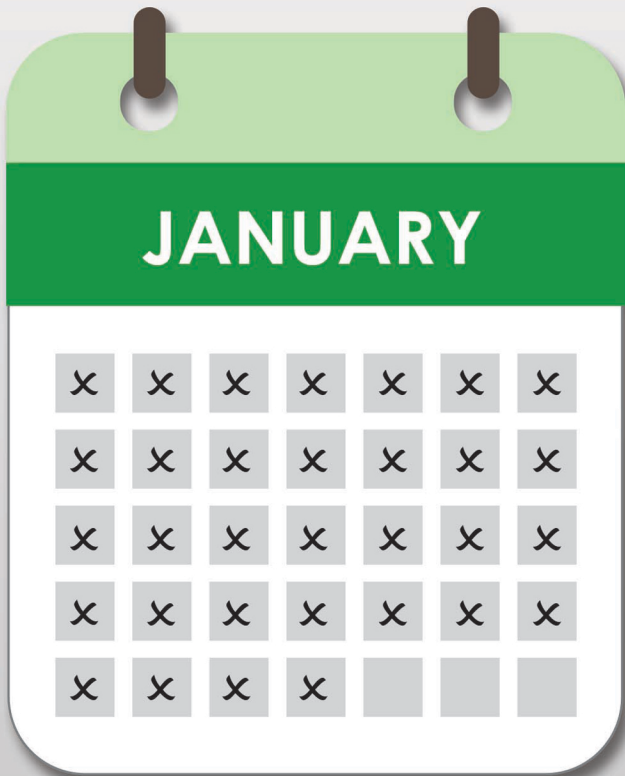
But now there are new treatments that just have pills!

The good news: most people who are treated are **CURED**.

Can I improve my chance of success?

YES!

Hep C is tricky, so be sure to take
ALL of your medicines EVERY SINGLE DAY.



That's important!
Don't give hepatitis C a chance to fight back!

Will I be cured?

PROBABLY.

Most people who take the treatment get rid of the virus and it never comes back.

That means they're cured!



What if treatment DOESN'T work?



Hang in there! There are LOTS of new medicines for hep C, and even more are on the way!



Stay tuned and treatment will work for you!

A PUBLICATION OF



A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION

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